

## Preface

Since our common ancestors left their home in Africa and set out tens of thousands of years ago “to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1.28), we humans have not ceased to make journeys. We have travelled on foot, by horse and camel, elephant and ass, on trains and boats and planes – and even in spaceships.

Since 1875, when the Alliance took the first step on its journey, we have travelled to many shores. Our last stop was the 23rd general council (Debrecen 1997). There the Alliance paused to survey the distance we had covered during the previous seven years, to remind ourselves of the pain and joy, excitement and distress, and to dream what we were to do in the seven years to come.

Our God, the Lord of our history, surprises us with many things we dare not dream. Who among us imagined seven years ago that we would hold our 24th general council in Africa, where our common ancestors began their journey of life to the other continents of the world? And who among us thought that the theme of the council would be life itself – life given by God, life with its promises and disappointments, nurtured by love and devastated by violence?

This volume testifies to what all of us together as the World Alliance of Reformed Churches have done during the past seven years. It is an account of what we were inspired to dream and do in our churches and communities. It tells the story of the journeys we continue to make with God in the company of people of other faiths and cultures.

Above all, it invites us to dream again, to be part of the future as a Reformed and reforming community of women, men and children, trying to be faithful to the Jesus who breaks down the barriers of religion, race, gender, and class, and testifying to the boundless love and compassion of God.

*CS Song, president*